

HEAL

European Anthology of best practices and future recommendations



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Introduction


Trafficking in human beings usually constitutes a serious transnational crime and a blatant violation of fundamental human rights. It is a modern form of slavery, affecting all genders and ages and it may take the form of sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude and related practices, the removal of vital organs and the recruitment for criminal acts (Europol, N.D)¹. The most common forms of trafficking in human beings in Italy, Greece², Spain ³ and Romania⁴ are sexual exploitation and forced labour , while beggary is the third most common form of trafficking in the latter three countries. A very large portion of the victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are women and girls.

¹ Europol (N.D.). Trafficking in Human Beings. Retrieved from: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/trafficking-in-human-beings>.

² National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking (2019). Έκθεση του Εθνικού Μηχανισμού Αναφοράς για την Προστασία Θυμάτων Εμπορίας Ανθρώπων (Ιανουάριος-Ιούνιος 2019). Retrieved from: https://sway.office.com/xpLNDJmZlUnQ8lQa?fbclid=IwAR1Fgxjn3a8m9jtSb0v-rosda9eb7Q0_jylMmVxf_44zvFVX6V09Adj-5lc

³ Public prosecutor report on open investigations, 2017.

⁴ ANITP (2019) Raport Național privind evoluția traficului de persoane, în anul 2018 Ministerul Afacerilor Interne Agenția Națională împotriva Traficului de Persoane.

The background of the page features a stylized illustration. On the left, a hand is shown holding another hand. On the right, a hand is shown making a peace sign. The hands are rendered in various shades of brown and orange. The background is a solid light pink color. There are also some floral patterns, including a large pink flower on the left and a green dress with white flowers on the right.

The project ‘HEAL - enHancing rEcovery and integrAtion through networking, empLoyment training and psychological support for women victims of trafficking’ 2019-2021 aims at facilitating the integration of third country national (TCN) women victims of trafficking (VoT) for sexual exploitation in Italy, Greece, Spain and Romania through a **healing process** comprising of **psychological recovery** and **employment-related skills** acquisition. More specifically, the project aims at:

SHARED AND IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING

of the **identified needs** of TCN women VoT and **improved cooperation** amongst them, service providers and employers

DESIGNING A RECOVERY & INTEGRATION PROGRAMME


fostering the **socio-economic integration** of TCN women VoT through their enhanced **psychosocial wellbeing** and **employment-related skills**

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DATABASE

addressing to trained service providers

ENHANCED AWARENESS AMONGST TCN WOMEN VOT

enhanced **awareness** amongst TCN women VoT, service providers, employers and the general public on the **rights and services available** for the support of victims of trafficking, as well as the methodologies and tools promoted in the context of HEAL.



The first stage of the project included a mapping of the profiles and perceived needs of **TCN women VoT, support service providers and employers** in each partner country, promoting a **common understanding of the identified needs** as well as of **rights and services accessible** for women VoT. The **needs assessment** also aimed to identify **best practices and main challenges in the work of support service providers**, thus encouraging knowledge and skill exchange and producing a shared body of knowledge and tools to improve service provision for women VoT. Upon the implementation of the needs assessment, the **HEAL Committee** was established, involving two representatives of each of the aforementioned groups. The Committee participated in two local round tables and an international **European Networking Day event**, where they found **opportunities for interaction** and constructive dialogue on **understanding local market needs, mapping soft and employment-related needs, opportunities for employment, good practices, challenges and strategies to overcome these obstacles**. Finally, the HEAL committees discussed the **rights of TCN women VoT** and **ways to overcome employers' potential reluctance to hire women**.

The present document summarises the **good practices and challenges** as emerged from the **needs assessment** and the results of **local and transnational networking**, as well as provides **recommendations to ensure long-term communication between relevant actors and the cover of TCN women VoT needs**.



Good practices

Success stories

When referring to success stories, support service providers who participated in the needs assessment conducted in Italy referred to survivors who were able to file a complaint and others who have become members of associations or founded one themselves. Greek support service providers mentioned European funded projects, such as HEAL, as good practices and described cases of TCN women VoT that were safely repatriated, started working, had their own families, were granted scholarships or are in a good psychological state and have entered the labour market. However, further support should be provided to TCN women VoT in terms of psychological support, integration in the society and labour market, legal support, networking and other aspects of their general integration in the host country.

Psychological support

ART THERAPY &

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Art therapy and occupational therapy for the recovery from trauma and the emotional consequences of trafficking, contributing to the empowerment, development of self-esteem and self-confidence, especially suitable for victims who are not ready to attend a deeper therapeutic process.

SAFE SPACE & PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH CULTURAL MEDIATORS

Provision of a safe space for women and psychotherapy with cultural mediators who have been trained in psychology and come from the same or a similar country/area, in terms of cultural background, to the country/area of origin of the beneficiary (Centro Penc project, Italy).

PEER MENTORING PROGRAMME

Development of a peer mentoring programme; survivors who are in a more advanced state of psychological recovery help other women that have recently sought help from organisations (Assist project, Spain).

NETWORK AMONGST SERVICES

A network amongst services, which enables the improvement of the psychological intervention.

PERSONALISED

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

and development of a long term therapeutic relationship.

ACCOMMODATION AND

ACCOMPANIMENT

Accommodation of women in shelters and accompaniment by a social worker during the process of reconstructing their lives (Maddalena project, Italy).

SUPPORT PROVISION

BY SURVIVORS

Support provision to victims of abuse/trafficking, founded and run by survivors ("Donne di Benin City", Italy).

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

Creation of positive interactions through intercultural exchange, contributing to the inclusion of TCN women VoT.

INDIVIDUAL PLANNING

Development of an individual plan of recovery for each woman, including decisions about the budget they will need and agree together on the best course of action within that financial limit; the budget also cover training courses and possible initial investment for entrepreneurial ideas (Organisation ADPARE, Romania).

LONG-TERM DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Provision of long-term direct assistance by a social worker, counselling and accompanying women and teach them how to navigate the system.

PARTICIPATIVE PROCESS

Development of a participative process of integration, in context of which survivors will make decisions for themselves in every stage of the process.

Labour market integration



ACCOMPANIMENT OF TCN WOMEN VOT

in job interviews and assistance in developing their CV (A21-Greece). Support provision for the first two months of getting hired.

PROJECT 'WHOMEN'25-HOUR TRAINING

on soft skills for vulnerable group women. (Romania)

PROGRESS PLATFORM OF UNHCR:

people are registered to receive financial support and work experience and level of education are some of the information requested by each individual. This way if an organisation needs employees with a specific background, UNHCR comes into contact and introduces the employers to the potential employees. (UNHCR-Greece)

RAI PROGRAMME

in context of which individual support is provided to each women in order to define her objectives of integration in the labour market, amongst other objectives in her life (holistic approach); the integration in the labour market is based on the analysis of her competences developed throughout her life (SURT-Spain). A specialized social worker assists refugees/migrants on access to labour, providing a specific support, identifying skills, determining professional project (Forum réfugiés-Cosi-France).

SOCIAL TAILORING PROJECT "IN-TESSERE"

implemented by I.E. Gruppo Abele Onlus and the MultiEthnic Restaurant (Coop Apeiron IT) – Suheila

Awareness and Outreach

INFORMATION & ADVICE PROVISION

on immigration, asylum, emigration and voluntary return (Service for Assistance to Immigrants, Migrants and Refugees [SAIER], Spain).

LEAFLETS

addressing women victims of trafficking and providing information on existing local services (prepared by ASP [Local Health Authority] and UNICEF, Italy).

AWARENESS TO THE PUBLIC REGARDING TRAFFICKING

Awareness raising campaigns for the provision of information to the public regarding trafficking in human beings and ways to identify a victim (A21-Greece).

CULTURAL EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES

Long-term awareness raising and cultural exchange activities organized together with the local community for the promotion of acceptance and integration.

Legal support

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Provision of legal assistance to foreign citizens and refugees (A Buon Diritto, Italy).

TRAINING OF EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

Training of potential employees on their labour rights and of frontline professionals and judges on human trafficking.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION & COUNSELLING

Legal representation at court and legal counselling by private lawyers, in cooperation with Bar Associations.

ACCOMPANIMENT & SUPPORT

DURING THE LEGAL PROCEDURE

Direct assistance and psychological support throughout the legal procedure.

Networking

PROJECT 'TRACKS: IDENTIFICATION OF TRAFFICKED ASYLUM SEEKERS' SPECIAL NEEDS'

analysis of the special needs of trafficked asylum seekers and equipment of national asylum authorities and civil society organizations to tackle crosscutting issues (Forum Réfugiés – Cosi-France).
TRIPS project on the integration of special needs of trafficked international protection beneficiaries.

ARIADNE NETWORK AGAINST TRAFFICKING

in Human Beings in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, established in 2005, seated in Athens, Greece, mostly focusing on women and children who were victims or potential victims of human trafficking. 16 NGOs from 12 countries participated in coordinated actions amongst countries of origin, transit and destination in order to contribute to the tackling of trafficking in human beings.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SURT FOUNDATION AND ADORATRIUS SICAR.CAT

on the establishment of a network with other services specialised in the assistance of TCN women VoT and the promotion of processes of comprehensive and multidisciplinary support. (Spain)

COORDINATION & COOPERATION WITH OTHER SERVICES

specialized in labour intermediation and prospection [Fundació Intermedia] (SURT-Spain).

ESTABLISHMENT OF NETWORKS WITH COMMUNITIES

established by refugees and come to contact with newly arrived refugees and migrants. (UNHCR-Greece)

Identified Challenges

Challenges of TCN women VoT

As emerged from the needs assessment, TCN women VoT face **difficulties relating to employment and employability**. TCN women VoT living in Italy face difficulties in finding a job that allows them to take care of their family and children, due to the long working hours and low salary; women living in Greece also reported to face difficulties combining work and raising their children. Other women living in Italy reported not to be regularly paid or have regular contracts and, thus, **struggling to cover their basic needs**. TCN women VoT living in Spain found that job search constitutes an everyday struggle due to their unfamiliarity with services providing relevant support and lan-

guage barriers, hindering their economic stability and independence. **Unemployment** was identified as a challenge faced by TCN women VoT living in Greece, either due to **language barriers** or due to **lack of experience**. Italian participants referred to the prejudice towards Nigerian women often manifested by employers.

All Committees have confirmed that the current **labour market faces great difficulties**, making it hard to find a job. Italian and Greek participants agreed that the **lack of regular contracts and health insurance** leads to the reiteration and persistence of the circle of exploitation of TCN women VoT.

‘When someone asks them for 20 euros to prepare the necessary papers [...] needed to work in a restaurant or when someone tells them that [...] they will work and get paid in five months’

Representative of TCN women VoT, Greek Committee

The Greek Committee referred to the **impact of the 10-year financial crisis** in the labour market that was followed by the **COVID-19 crisis** and the changes that have emerged, i.e. the **lack of vacancies**, the **struggle of employers to keep their businesses** and the **dismissal of employees**. As mentioned during the round table discussion organised in Romania, even though the sector of HORECA was the one that was most affected by the recent Covid-19 crisis, the production sector is still in need of new employees, while more vacancies are expected to be available as soon as the sectors of tourism and traveling pick up again. Even though the usual 1-3 month contracts women living in Spain are offered may be extended or renewed, women cannot plan their future and feelings of uncertainty and instability are generated.

Some Spanish and Greek Committee members mentioned that there have been cases of **employers being reluctant to hire TCN women VoT**. Nonetheless, Greek support service providers clarified that TCN women VoT cannot always define the form of discrimination they experience per se; meaning whether they are discriminated against because they are women, refugees and/or because they do not have the necessary qualifications. On the other hand, Spanish Committee members representing employers mentioned that the aforementioned discrimination is mainly based on the mistrust of the education systems of non-EU countries, such as Venezuela and Nigeria, among other factors that generate discrimination and inequality.

Furthermore, language constitutes a major difficulty for TCN women VoT residing in Greece, as it can also lead to further **challenges related to socialisation, accessing services and employment**. Representatives of TCN women VoT from Romania highlighted the **language barriers** as the ones that affect women the most, except for women citizens of Moldova, who speak a dialect of Romanian; courses are only available in morning hours, making it hard for women who work or have children to attend. The same barriers were also reported to be prevalent in Spain, as women need to domain Spanish and Catalan but, in many cases, especially at high levels, languages courses are not free, so women VoT have difficulties to improve their knowledge of both languages while searching for a job.

TCN women VoT living in Italy also reported to **not receiving adequate financial assistance** by the State. The aforementioned instability also applies to women residing in Greece, in terms of **covering their basic needs, accommodation status, access to basic healthcare and social services**, as well as **financial and material support**. Accommodation was the

second most common challenge reported by TCN women VoT living in Spain, and especially those who are no longer eligible for residential resources.

Even though some TCN women VoT had basic knowledge on their rights, in most cases women appeared to have **limited or no knowledge of the rights** they are entitled. Participants from Italy mentioned some generic fundamental rights, such as freedom of movement and respect of the law, but could not elaborate further. Romanian participants stated the TCN women VoT are not familiar with their rights and local service providers for sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). On the other hand, TCN women VoT living in Greece have basic knowledge on their rights and organisations that provide support, as they have received information by organisations, the police and the Asylum Office. The same applied to TCN women VoT living in Spain; most mentioned their right to apply for asylum as victims of trafficking, while some referred to their labour rights.

The employer that participated in the round tables conducted in Greece

highlighted that TCN women VoT are not familiar with their labour rights and/or the labour status in the country. The Spanish representative of TCN women VoT underlined the limited and uncertain contracts offered to women VoT, generating feelings of insecurity and vulnerability to exercise and defend their labour rights. Committee members from Romania drew the attention to the different labour rights TCN women VoT have, depending on the form of protection they have received and other factors, such as whether they have family members who are Romanian citizens. The Greek employer that participated in the round table also clarified that,

in contrast to the research findings, asylum seekers are not entitled to establish their own business.

Other identified challenges by Spanish and Greek Committee members was the lack of recognition of women's professional trajectories and the bureaucratic and administrative boundaries that aggravate their situation of vulnerability. Greek participants added that women sometimes cannot prove their former work experience and previously acquired skills, while employers usually need relevant certificates to hire TCN women VoT.

Challenges of support service providers

Support service providers that participated in the needs assessment, round tables and European Networking Day elaborated on the challenges they face in their work. Support service providers from Italy and Greece confirmed that cultural elements affect human trafficking. For instance, relevant rites might prevent women from contacting authorities to report an incident or seek help. Greek providers added that such practices are common in Arabic countries, while the influence of 'juju' is usually manifested towards women coming from Africa, where threats might be addressed to the women's families. Italian support service providers also mentioned that Muslim women might be hesitant or unwilling to talk about such incidents.

Italian participants focused on the language elements and the lack of interpreters that may affect their work with the victims. Furthermore, Greek stakeholders underlined that such cultural elements are interconnected with financial elements, i.e. the financial situation of the wom-

an, and her position in the society. Spanish professionals focused on the ways cultural elements affect resilience processes. The recovery of victims from Nigeria is usually influenced by a spiritual base, where bonding with the church often favours community networking, while this basis also affects the quality of the services. On the other hand, TCN women VoT from the Eastern Europe present greater resistance in identifying and reporting traffickers, often due to existing romantic ties with them. Romanian professionals underlined the influence of gender roles in the phenomenon, as some of the women may not identify themselves as victims on the basis of the common notion regarding women and their role in the societal and familial context.

Support service providers from Italy pointed out the impact of culture when delivering services. Professionals find it hard to develop a relationship of trust. TCN women VoT do not want to open up to a person from their own community and would rather a complete stranger

to work as an interpreter or mediator, while they do not feel comfortable talking to male professionals. Some of the Greek professionals mentioned the risk of victims being approached by traffickers; however, relevant measures are taken to protect the anonymity, confidentiality and safety of the victim. Greek support service providers underlined that logistic matters, such as the funding of available shelters, constitute a challenge in delivering adequate support services.

Support service providers from Italy noted that they face difficulties reaching TCN women VoT, as procedures have changed; women no longer arrive in the coasts with boats, where they were identified by specialists, while women who live in the mainland can only be identified through police controls. It was underlined that the Territorial Commission, which is under the Ministry of Interior, follows specific indicators for the identification of victims: women's consent constitutes a prerequisite and many of the victims are unwilling declare themselves victims or do not identify themselves as such. Greek support service providers highlighted

the disbelief and distrust expressed by TCN women VoT towards authorities and professionals, while one referred to the difficulty in approaching and identifying women who are not accommodated in shelters. Professionals from Spain identified the lack of resources and services, the difficulty in working with trauma and its consequences, the paternalistic, re-victimising and stigmatising attitudes towards women, the scarcity of economic resources, as well as the lack of rights protecting women as the main challenges in reaching TCN women VoT or delivering services. Romanian support service providers highlighted the impact family and friends have in reaching TCN women VoT, as they might prevent the individual from seeking help, while often appear unwilling to attend psychotherapy sessions. They also stated that many victims might seek support, but then go back to the toxic environment, while some of the victims do not identify themselves as such. Lastly, the multitude of structures and provisions regulating the services to victims results in a lack of coordination and a confusion amongst

the institutions on their role in the general protection procedures.

Another challenge identified by the Italian and Spanish Committee was the difficulty of providing long-term support, as the continuous improvement of women's professional profiles, beyond their short-term integration in the la-

bour market is of vital importance. As the Italian Committee underlined, the project-based work sometimes leads to insufficient or discontinued service provision. Spanish and Greek Committee members also commented on the existing administrative and bureaucratic barriers in finding a job.

Recommendations

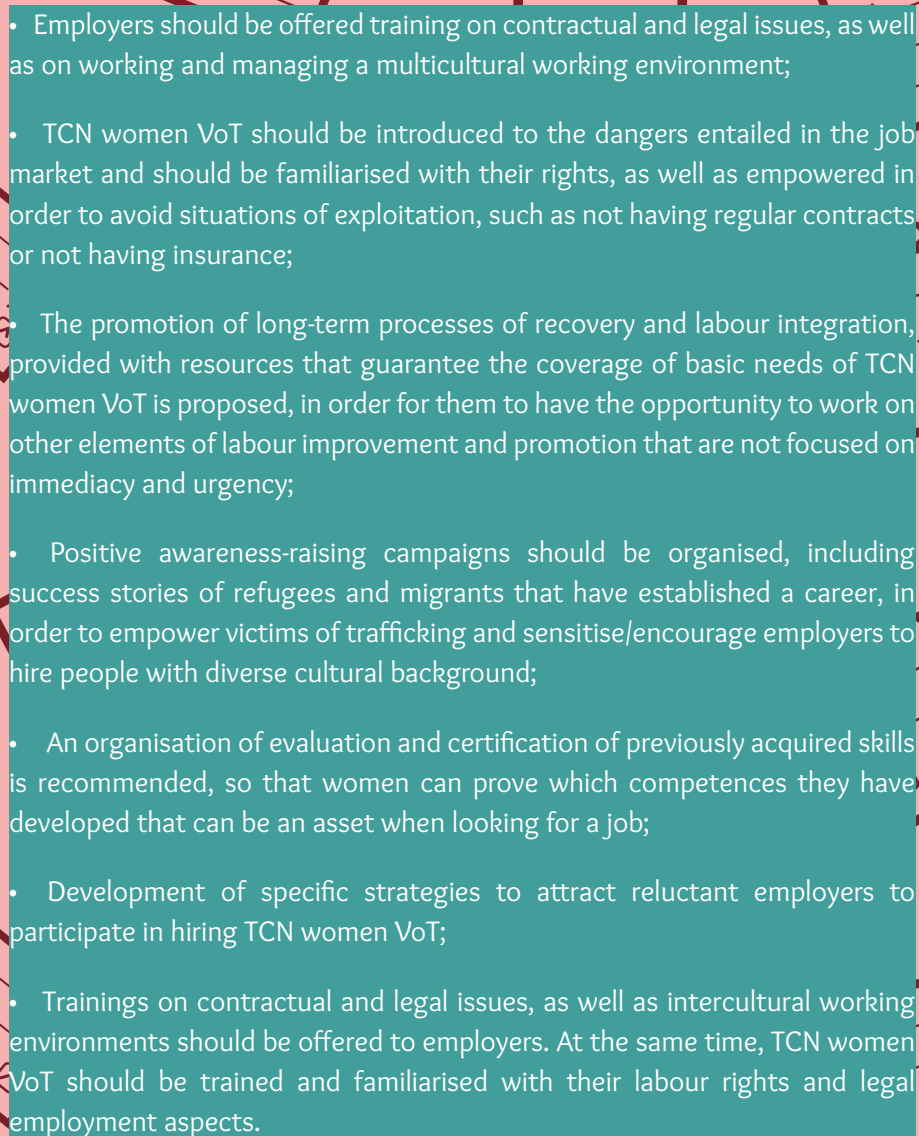
IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

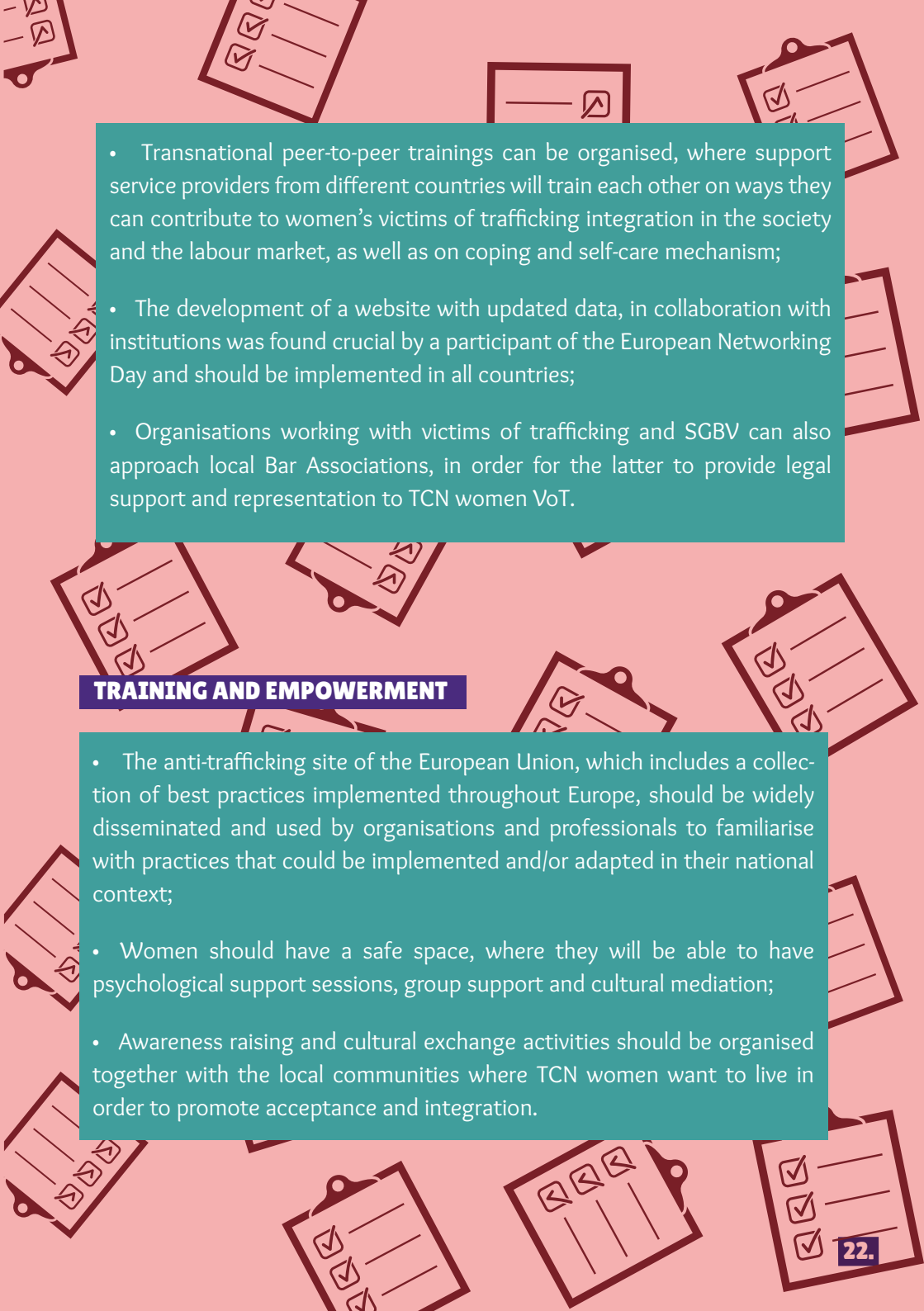
- Transnational networks should be promoted, so that employers, support service providers and TCN women VoT can provide their insights on existing gaps and needs, while professionals should support one another;
- A common platform for professionals to share useful information they might have was recommended during the transnational cooperation meeting. Key stakeholders can have virtual discussions on good practices and methods that could be implemented in their country/organisation/company as well;
- Participants of the European Networking Day recommended to look for and connect with other existing EU and regional networks;
- A transnational event, accommodating presentations of different European projects focusing on several aspects of the phenomenon would be beneficial for stakeholders to familiarise with what is being done;
- Organisations participating in transnational exchange should promote relevant good practices and efforts for transnational communication and cooperation to other local and national organisations working with women, migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking and SGBV;
- More online meetings should be organised, where different participants can share their experiences on a specific topic;
- Relevant actors can exchange information on available financing opportunities, in order to overlap the existing logistic difficulties usually faced by the professionals and the victims of trafficking when delivering/receiving services;

- Transnational peer-to-peer trainings can be organised, where support service providers from different countries will train each other on ways they can contribute to women's victims of trafficking integration in the society and the labour market, as well as on coping and self-care mechanism;
- The development of a website with updated data, in collaboration with institutions was found crucial by a participant of the European Networking Day and should be implemented in all countries;
- Organisations working with victims of trafficking and SGBV can also approach local Bar Associations, in order for the latter to provide legal support and representation to TCN women VoT.

TCN WOMEN VoT INTEGRATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

- A joint effort towards TCN women VoT smooth integration in the labour market should be implemented, with the involvement of all relevant key actors, i.e. employers, support service providers and TCN women VoT;
- Support service providers, TCN women VoT/ their representatives and employers should join forces to further map the needs of these three target groups, as developed after the Covid-19 crisis;
- Women VoT should be empowered and have an active role in their everyday life and the procedures followed for their integration;
- More comprehensive follow-up in the process of labour integration, once TCN women VoT have been hired, is recommended, in order for them to have a safe space to share their experiences and challenges and discuss on strategies to overcome relevant issues;

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- Employers should be offered training on contractual and legal issues, as well as on working and managing a multicultural working environment;
 - TCN women VoT should be introduced to the dangers entailed in the job market and should be familiarised with their rights, as well as empowered in order to avoid situations of exploitation, such as not having regular contracts or not having insurance;
 - The promotion of long-term processes of recovery and labour integration, provided with resources that guarantee the coverage of basic needs of TCN women VoT is proposed, in order for them to have the opportunity to work on other elements of labour improvement and promotion that are not focused on immediacy and urgency;
 - Positive awareness-raising campaigns should be organised, including success stories of refugees and migrants that have established a career, in order to empower victims of trafficking and sensitise/encourage employers to hire people with diverse cultural background;
 - An organisation of evaluation and certification of previously acquired skills is recommended, so that women can prove which competences they have developed that can be an asset when looking for a job;
 - Development of specific strategies to attract reluctant employers to participate in hiring TCN women VoT;
 - Trainings on contractual and legal issues, as well as intercultural working environments should be offered to employers. At the same time, TCN women VoT should be trained and familiarised with their labour rights and legal employment aspects.

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TRAINING AND EMPOWERMENT

- The anti-trafficking site of the European Union, which includes a collection of best practices implemented throughout Europe, should be widely disseminated and used by organisations and professionals to familiarise with practices that could be implemented and/or adapted in their national context;
- Women should have a safe space, where they will be able to have psychological support sessions, group support and cultural mediation;
- Awareness raising and cultural exchange activities should be organised together with the local communities where TCN women want to live in order to promote acceptance and integration.

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A vibrant collage of stylized human faces and abstract shapes in various colors (orange, red, yellow, teal, purple) on a pink background. The faces represent different ethnicities and ages. Some faces are partially obscured by a central text box.

'What is important is to do an additional effort and boost what we already have.'

Italian Committee member



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